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TIME FOR A NEW STRATEGY
FOR INDIA

ESSAY PAPER

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On April 11, 1999 India conducted a test launch of its Agni II Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM). Last tested in 1994, this nuclear capable missile has a range in excess of 1,240 miles and can reach targets in both Pakistan and China. When asked about possible negative international political fallout, India's Defense Minister stated "India will not compromise its national security with anyone. We don't need to be told by anybody about restraint."¹ This defiant stance comes on the heel of India's May 1998 underground nuclear tests that resulted in global condemnation and sanctions by the U.S. and 14 other countries. When one considers that the dominant emphasis of U.S. strategy in the region is the prevention of nuclear proliferation and development of ballistic missiles and looks at the scorecard of India's actions over the past 11 months, it appears the strategy is failing. It is the thesis of this paper that a U.S. strategy with India which focuses primarily on the nuclear proliferation issue via a series of treaties and legislative actions is ineffective in influencing India's nuclear actions and damages possible progress in other U.S. areas of interests. A 1997 Task Force, sponsored by the Council of Foreign Relations, recommended the U.S. "should significantly expand its bilateral economic, political, and military ties providing a broad array of incentives to help bring about restraint in the proliferation area."² An economically strong and friendly India to the U.S. could promote stability (if it shows restraint in its nuclear program which tends to excite Pakistan), provide an economic catalyst for a growing import/export market beneficial to the region and Asia and become a valuable trade/investment partner with the U.S.³ This paper will discuss the evolving interests of

¹ Arthur Max, "India Tests Nuclear Missile Despite Pleas, U.S. Fears New Arms Race With Neighboring Pakistan," *The Washington Post* (April 12, 1999) A16

² Richard N. Haass, et al. *A new U.S. Policy Toward India and Pakistan* (New York, 1997) 26

³ *Ibid.*, 35

the U S with India, look at past/current South Asia strategy and recommend how the U S should change its strategy to better meet its national interests in the region

U.S. Interests

In the past, South Asia has held little interest to the U S and was described by the State Department as “on the backside of every American diplomatic globe”⁴ U S interests were primarily focused on limiting Soviet Union and China influence in the area with military sales and economic relations designed as a zero-sum gain to counter communism. There was little interest in the area other than to promote stability between India and Pakistan and to prevent communist inroads. With the end of the Cold War, U S interests in the region remained on the back burner while attention was focused in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. But over the last decade U S interests in the area, while not vital, are important and growing.

Events around the world have increased the importance of the South Asia region, especially India, to the U S. From a geostrategic perspective, India's neighbor to the north is China, the country the U S views as its most important emerging economic and military rival. The critical oil and gas resources of the Middle East/Caspian Basin are to the west, the Asian Tiger economic potential to the east and the vital sea lines of communication connecting the two to the south. From a country perspective, India is only 1/3 the size of the U S but has 1/5 of the world's population which is increasing 2.1% a year. Of its 952 million people, it has a large growing middle class of 150-200 million who provide a significant market for services and consumer goods. The U S is India's largest trading and investment partner, comprising \$9.5 and \$6-7 billion.

⁴ Karl F. Inderfurth. “U S Interests and Policy Goals in South Asia.” 22 October 1997, U S State Department 1

respectively India is experiencing internal instability from its many ethnic groups, factional political parties, a 30% poverty level, environmental degradations, and an illiteracy rate of 48%⁵ Probably of most concern for the U S is the ongoing tension between India and Pakistan A long common border, a history of war (three times in the last 50 years), ongoing tensions over Kashmir, an actual continuing "shooting conflict" over the Siachen glacier, the declared nuclear status of both countries in 1998 and each testing ballistic missiles in April 1999 all provide reasons for promoting stability in the region to be a primary U S interest

Taking these factors into account, six primary interests should guide the U S in its strategy development towards India 1) Preventing a major war with two nuclear capable countries and a history of conflict, it is essential to keep tensions from crossing a peaceful threshold 2) Restricting strategic nuclear exports India's responsible control of its nuclear weapons, technology and fissile material is a vital U S nonproliferation interest 3) Restraining a nuclear arms race after India performed its nuclear weapons tests, Pakistan followed suit Three days after India test launched its IRBM, Pakistan test launched theirs Both countries are politically driven to match the other's actions 4) Expanding economic trade and investment the U S has doubled its trade with India since 1992 India's emerging industrial capability coupled with cheap labor provide a growing economic market that are of interest to the U S and other countries 5) Promoting internal stability and democracy a primary interest is having effective government control of India's nuclear program In addition, a stable government enhances the ability of the U S to establish broader economic, diplomatic and military ties 6) Promoting political and military cooperation with the U S India's strategic

⁵ U S Department of State, "Background Notes India. November 1997," 1-6

location and size of its forces make it a potentially valuable partner to the U S ⁶

Evaluation of past and current U S strategy shows that the primary focus is towards nonproliferation (interests 2 and 3) Keeping nonproliferation as the centerpiece of U S strategy with India will preclude any significant progress in the other areas of interests that are of growing importance to the U S

Past and Current U.S. Strategy

Lack of U S interest in the region is evident by reviewing past national security strategy South Asia strategy was usually restricted to one to three paragraphs, sometimes with the same wording from year to year

National Security Strategy for the U S (South Asia Region)		
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduce Pakistan/India tensions via confidence building measures- Discourage nuclear proliferation- Promote democratic institutions and economic development- End narcotics trafficking- Oppose Soviets in Afghanistan⁷	Cold War focus majority of discussion centering around nuclear proliferation and expanding ties with India and Pakistan to foster regional stability (with an agenda to get Soviets out of Afghanistan)
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Global forms of control over supply of WMD and means to deliver them- Reduce India-Pakistan tensions via confidence building measures⁸	Iraq focus only a single paragraph on South Asia Dangers of IRBMs and nuclear proliferation in the region emphasized
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Resolve long standing conflict and implement confidence building measures- Cap, reduce, eliminate WMD and their ballistic missile capabilities⁹	Proliferation focus only a single paragraph on South Asia Same emphasis on nuclear issue, recognition that region contains ¼ of the world's population and it is one of the world's most important emerging markets
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bring nuclear and missile programs into conformity with international standards- Reduce the risk of conflict via confidence building measures- Regional stability/better bilateral	Engagement focus A step towards delinking Pakistan and India relations U S will pursue interests with each country individually rather than a balance of one against the other Proliferation concern still emphasized

⁶ Haass 23-25

⁷ *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington DC The White House, January 1988) 29-30

⁸ *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington DC The White House, August 1991) 10

⁹ *A National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington DC The White House, February 1995) 31

	<p>ties important for U S economic interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish relationships with India and Pakistan that are defined in terms of their own merits¹⁰ 	with the addition of international standards as a measure of compliance
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolve long standing conflict and implement confidence building measures - Establish relationships based on individual country merits - Nuclear tests resulted in sanctions - Renounce further tests, sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) - Join in fissile material production cut-off negotiations - Refrain from testing, deployment or weaponization of ballistic missiles¹¹ 	<p>Reaction focus ½ page devoted to South Asia, mainly a rephrase of 1997 strategy with majority of interest devoted to the May 1998 nuclear tests</p> <p>Full focus of strategy is to stop any further escalation of a nuclear arms race in the region and to resolve tensions between India and Pakistan before a mistake could escalate out of control</p>

Concern over proliferation is a common theme throughout, with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of U S policy to control the spread of nuclear weapons. It is supported by congressional legislation of the Glenn and Symington Amendments (now incorporated into the Nuclear Nonproliferation Act of 1994)¹² and an array of international agreements/treaties such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), CTBT and the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT). U S /India bilateral relationships are subordinated by the legal mandates contained in this legislation and on conforming to the treaties.

1 **NPT** Signed in 1968, it was designed to prevent further spread of nuclear weapons outside of the five countries already having this capacity. "States that had not tested at the time of signature would promise never to develop or acquire nuclear weapons, in

¹⁰ *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington DC: The White House, May 1997) 27

¹¹ *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington DC: The White House, October 1998) 53

¹² Haass, 42

exchange, the parties agreed to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology with one another and to work toward the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons 182 nonnuclear weapons states plus Taiwan have joined the NPT .- only four states-India, Pakistan, Israel, and Cuba-remain outside the global regime ”¹³

2. Glenn Amendment “ prohibits most assistance to any country that delivers or receives reprocessing equipment and cuts off assistance to any nonnuclear state, as defined in the NPT, that tests a nuclear device Waiving the sanctions for testing requires a joint resolution of Congress Any detonation of a nuclear explosive device by India .would trigger application of the Glenn Amendment sanctions, including termination of most forms of economic assistance, defense sales and services, credit guarantees, U S Export-Import Bank support, and more ”¹⁴

3. Symington Amendment “ forbids most assistance to any country that delivers or receives unsafeguarded nuclear enrichment equipment, materials or technology requires the president to certify that terminating aid would have a serious adverse effect on vital U S interests and that he has received reliable assurances that the country in question will not acquire or develop nuclear weapons or assist other nations in doing so ”¹⁵

4. MTCR In 1987, the U S along with its G-7 partners implemented a regime to restrict transfers of nuclear-capable missiles and related technology National space programs are excluded from the regime’s controls as long as such programs do not contribute to possible weapons delivery systems Thus “dual-use” potential is evaluated on a case-by-case basis Since 1993, the U S has insisted that states wishing to join

¹³ Strobe Talbott, “Dealing with the Bomb in South Asia,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol 78 No 2 (March/April 1999), 112-113

¹⁴ Haass, 42

¹⁵ Ibid 42-43

MTCR give up their offensive missile programs as a precondition and in return will receive increased space cooperation into the multi-billion dollar space market. In addition, the U S is the only country with laws that require imposition of sanctions on countries that import/export items regulated by the MTCR, whether the country is a member of the regime or not ¹⁶ India, with two nuclear missile delivery systems, is heavily sanctioned under this regime even though it has a decades-old space program

5. CTBT Bans all nuclear test explosions of any yield. “By banning all nuclear explosions, the CTBT makes it impossible for states to develop new types of nuclear weapons with any confidence, thereby inhibiting a regional nuclear arms race”¹⁷ An indication of responsible nuclear custodianship would be for India to sign the treaty

6. FMCT A treaty proposal underway for a worldwide ban on any further production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. All five declared nuclear states have already halted such production, and all but China have officially announced this ¹⁸ Again, if India entered into the treaty negotiations, it would be a positive indicator to the global community

When one looks at the NPT and its supporting legislation/treaties/agreements, it is clear why it has done such a great job in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. In 1963, President Kennedy predicted there would be 25 nuclear weapon states in 10 years. Instead, the NPT controlled this number to 7 declared states with Israel as the only suspected but undeclared state ¹⁹ India’s views of the NPT are clear cut, they see the NPT as discriminatory by the “have” states against the “have nots.” In a paper sent to the

¹⁶ The Arms Control Association, “Background Paper: The Missile Technology Control Regime.” 1-4

¹⁷ Talbott, 115

¹⁸ Haass, 21

¹⁹ Talbott, 112-113

lower house of India's parliament after the May nuclear tests, India's position on why it chose to test its nuclear weapons was based on the fact that the NPT perpetuated the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five NPT nuclear states, some of which had a first-use doctrine, and who are also engaged nuclear modernization programs. In addition, India's testing was based on national security concerns.²⁰ NPT did not work in the case of India because the U.S. predominate national security strategy of nonproliferation runs counter to India's perceived national security threat from a nuclear Pakistan and China on its borders with whom it has fought four wars with over the last 50 years. The sanctions and restrictions imposed on India enforcing nonproliferation while India pursued its nuclear program have significantly impacted U.S./India economic development programs, diplomatic relations and military ties. It is time for the U.S. to refocus its strategy in order to establish sound relations with India which both countries will need going into the 21st century.

A Refocused Strategy

The initial action the U.S. should immediately take is to delink India's nuclear issue from making progress in other economic, diplomatic and military areas. As has already been seen, the NPT did not stop India from developing nuclear weapons and the sanctions are highly unlikely to stuff India's nuclear genie back in the bottle. One recommendation is for the U.S. to lead the international community in offering positive incentives to India for restraint in further nuclear weapon/delivery system development while, at the same time, recognize India's positive nonproliferation efforts towards their program. This may sound like a bribe for good behavior but 1) the U.S. must recognize

²⁰ Richard Haass and Morton Halperin, *After the Tests, U.S. Policy Toward India and Pakistan* (New York, 1998) 27

India isn't going to get rid of their nuclear weapons in the near future 2) we want to encourage future good behavior and 3) it's a similar logic that we used in our "encouragement" with North Korea's nuclear program These incentives would be contingent upon India's future continued responsible actions concerning their nuclear program Despite the nuclear tests and IRBM launch, India has shown responsibility towards its program both in nonproliferation control and testing India voluntarily turned down offers from Libya, Iran, and Iraq (signatories of the NPT as a matter of fact) for transfer of nuclear weapons/missile technology even though India could have greatly benefited from the foreign investment ²¹ India also announced after its nuclear tests it will observe a voluntary moratorium on conducting further underground nuclear tests with a formalized declaration in the future, will participate in FMCT negotiations, is committed to nonproliferation, and will maintain stringent export controls on its nuclear technology ²² Such responsible actions give the U S the opportunity to shift its purest nonproliferation focus trying to achieve unrealistic aims to a strategy which can influence the safety of India's nuclear weapons program

The U S is an expert in nuclear safety, security, positive nuclear command and control and early warning procedures Another recommendation would be to take a U S lead in working jointly with India and Pakistan in developing monitoring procedures (which would require U S intelligence assets) with the goal of preventing a first use/preemptive strike doctrine by either country It is imperative to develop methods of resolving misunderstandings and control crisis escalation between two countries that

²¹ Waheguru Pal Singh Siddhu, *Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation*, Adelphi Paper #313, Oxford Press for International Institute for Strategic Studies (1997) 76

²² Haass and Halperin 30

share a common border with a minimum missile flight time. The U S should take the initiative in finding an "honest broker" that India and Pakistan would find acceptable for such a mediator role. Also, lessons learned by the U.S. on the safe handling, storage and training with nuclear assets should be shared. Fail-safe safety devices, positive action links embedded in weapon design and personnel reliability program screening are all methods the U S has evolved over the decades to prevent an accidental or unauthorized nuclear detonation. These are lessons the U.S. does not want India to learn through the school of hard knocks.

Can the U S adopt a strategy towards India where nonproliferation does not dominate the agenda? Absolutely. Israel is a primary example where the U S has taken a realist view when other national interests are at stake. Israel's nondeclared nuclear status has not hampered U S military and foreign aid. Also consider the U S /Israel joint \$500 million Arrow anti-ballistic missile program. The U S is sharing solid rocket booster/guidance technology²³, technology which has potential dual-use transfer over to boosters which could be used for ballistic missiles and could fall under control of the MTCR. The U S has chosen to evaluate that such a transfer of technology is not a risk and continues with the project. U S actions with Pakistan during the height of the Afghanistan/Soviet war are another case in point. The U S interest of countering the Soviet presence in Afghanistan outweighed the growing evidence that Pakistan was developing a nuclear weapons capability. The U S looked the other way due to long term Middle East interests and a short-term regional interest in the case of Israel and Pakistan, respectively. With India's growing importance in the region, it is in the interest of the

²³ USNI Military Database, *Arrow*, (accessed 21 April 1999), available from <http://www.persiscope.ucg.com/weapons/missrock/antiball/w0001281.html/>, internet

U S to adopt a similar realistic strategy. It will take political capital to make changes in legislation and acknowledge that India will be maintaining some level of nuclear capability. The Glenn amendment would require revision, changing it from a light switch approach to more of a rheostat control. This would allow for tailored responses to any future Indian nuclear missteps, rather than the sudden curtailment of most economic/military programs. Companies are reluctant to engage in Indian projects when sanctions can pull the rug out from under their investments.

Finally, the U S has an excellent opportunity to change its nuclear strategy with reduced political capital because of the recent fall of India's ruling Bharateya Janata Party (BJP). Both the nuclear weapons and IRBM tests may have been used to win public support as an aid for the BJP trying to maintain its government leadership over a diverse coalition of parties.²⁴ The IRBM test did not gain the same burst of public support that the nuclear tests did and the BJP failed a vote of confidence. With the seating of a new government under the lead of another Indian party, the U S has an ideal window of opportunity to publicly state its refocused strategy and engage with the new players. This engagement should cover a multitude of areas that would benefit both the U S and India.

India's economic growth is constrained by inadequate infrastructure and requires significant investment in power generation, telecommunications, roads, petroleum exploration and process mining.²⁵ U S capabilities in these areas are exceptional and benefits for both countries will result from engagement. Improving India's conventional coal burning power plants with high efficiency U S power technology would increase

²⁴ Max. A16

²⁵ U S Department of State, 6

India's power capacity while at the same time reduce its high air pollution levels. Similar headway should be made in India's public nuclear power plants, some of the oldest in the world. With U.S. refocus towards India's nuclear issue coupled with India's agreement to negotiate the FMCT, U.S. nuclear reactor safety technology should be transferred. Although some of these initiatives are already underway, the scope and magnitude must be increased, both governmental and private. U.S. incentives to private companies would help jump-start private sector investment programs with India. The telecommunications prospects are enormous, building the required infrastructure and meeting the demands of 952 million Indians should be an extremely profitable venture. India will have to do its part as well, especially in the areas of bureaucracy and tariffs, but the economic opportunities are as great in India as they are in China. India's space program is another excellent example of how the U.S. can jointly work with India for the benefit of both countries.

India's space program began in the 1960s and has evolved to where India is on the verge of being able to launch a heavy payload into geostationary orbit, a capability only achieved by the U.S., Russia, China, Europe and Japan. Their program consists of solid and liquid fuel multi-stage boosters and a robust satellite program (eight satellites currently in orbit) which provides multi-spectral sensing and telecommunications capabilities.²⁶ Since the same type of booster that places a satellite into orbit can also deliver a nuclear warhead to a target, U.S. MTCR sanctions have been restrictive and has forced India to develop most of its space program indigenously. India's development of the Prithvi and Agni ballistic missiles with ranges of 80-160 miles and 1,200-1,500 miles

²⁶ Dinshaw Mistry, "India's Emerging Space Program." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 21 No. 2 Summer 1998 151-156

respectively has placed barriers between any U S /India cooperation under the NPT and MTCR India's peaceful use of space via its satellite program offers the U S a politically acceptable avenue of cooperation rather than continued sanctions aimed at a military application (similar to the type of treatment imposed against "rogue" nations such as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea whose only potential use of space is military)

When one compares India's long established space industry to its military use of such technology, India's dual use possibilities fall commandingly towards peaceful use— putting satellites into space By using a combination of diplomatic efforts to gain assurances from India for voluntary restraint in further ballistic missile advances and economic ties towards peaceful space booster use, the U S can show India it has far more to gain in international trade launching satellites rather than in developing further ballistic missile delivery systems Satellite launch capability is a growth industry and there is not enough worldwide launch capability to place the satellites that are planned over the next decade into orbit In the past 10 years, 185 satellites were placed into geostationary orbit It is estimated that 1,200 will need to be placed into orbit over the next 10 years India's \$25-30 million price tag to launch satellites into low earth orbit and \$70-80 million for geostationary are the lowest prices on the market²⁷ With U S launch production/technology help, India could improve its low launch rate (one per year) and reliability, bringing critically needed foreign investment into the country and meeting a pressing international need The incentives for peaceful space use will be stronger than sanctions against ballistic missile development (that have proved ineffective thus far)

²⁷ Tom Lowry, "U S Satellite Firms fearful of China Ban, Industry Already has Shortage of Launch Sites," USA Today (16 July 1998) 4B

Another incentive would be putting an Indian astronaut on the space shuttle. Offering India such a space shuttle berth or possible international space station cooperation (subcontracting projects or launching parts of the station) are highly visible projects that should provide large Indian public support, cost the U S little and provide the Indian government a significant political bonus. Such incentives would be balanced against India's responsible actions in its ballistic missile program. An announcement that an Indian astronaut is going into space on the space shuttle should provide far more incentive than testing an IRBM which brings with it international condemnation.

Conclusion

U S strategy focusing on nonproliferation in the South Asia region has hamstrung the nation's ability to make positive progress towards India. India has made significant advancements in industrialization and the context of the entire region has changed and gained in importance. It is time to set aside a purest nonproliferation view which has failed to deter India from its present nuclear posture and instead engage with India on a broad range of economic, diplomatic and military avenues. Responsible nuclear program behavior by India is essential, but will be better gained by incentives rather than sanctions. India is approaching the millennium as a leading growing industrial power. Having India as a strong ally based on sustained cooperation will be in the U S ' important, if not vital, interest as India and the surrounding region gain in international importance in the 21st century. It's time to get off the soap box of no nukes, accept the fact that India has them, is going to keep them and move on to productive engagement.